



# Kevin Faulconer: Asking for ideas

**City is requesting proposals to address homelessness services; shelter to close tomorrow.**

By Councilmember Kevin Faulconer  
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Homelessness in San Diego is a growing problem and the economy is pushing more people to the streets at a time when the city's temporary winter shelter is set to close.

But, we are closer than ever to resolving the need for additional permanent housing solutions for some of our most vulnerable citizens.

The winter shelter, located downtown at 16th Street and Island Avenue, served more than 1,000 people this year. Those in the shelter were given beds, showers, medical attention and job training. The shelter, paid for with \$60,000 in donations and \$288,000 in city funds, opened at the end of November.

It closes tomorrow - April 1.

This week, the city, along with the San Diego Housing Commission and Centre City Development Corporation, is inviting interested parties to submit proposals to address the need for housing and services for homeless and extremely low income individuals and families who are at risk of becoming homeless.

The goal is to develop wrap-around services in a "one-stop" service center and to provide sufficient permanent housing, not necessarily at one location.

Numerous people and agencies, including the city's Permanent Homeless Facility Task Force, have spent a lot of time and effort developing the request for proposals.

I would be remiss if I didn't thank them, including Council President Ben Hueso and former Councilmember Toni Atkins, who served on the task force that I chaired for nearly two years.

While proposals are being sought primarily for Downtown San Diego, specific sites have not been identified and homelessness is not limited to Downtown; there are about 7,600 homeless people in San Diego County, including 4,100 in the city.

In San Diego, there are about 300 permanent beds for families who are homeless and 65 for individuals.

While an adequate supply of permanent housing is the central solution to homelessness, the purpose of this request is to call for a range of activities consistent with the Housing First/Housing Plus Model outlined in the City of San Diego's 10-year Plan To End Chronic Homelessness.

The planned center will house a range of homeless service providers and provide direct links to resources. Services will be designed to help people maintain physical and emotional health with a focus on substance abuse and mental health issues, and fostering housing stability.

Housing may include integrated apartment buildings with mixed units targeted toward people with special needs, lower income families, scattered site units, rent-subsidized units or a yet-to-be-determined model.

Some transitional and emergency shelters may be restructured to accommodate permanent housing units. The intent of this plan is not to do away with emergency shelters but rather to encourage innovative ideas for a new level of service.

The requests for proposals are due in June. A selection committee will review the entries, conduct interviews, narrow the field and make recommendations.

Adding more permanent housing also should help the city resolve a class action complaint filed in 2006. It says police cannot enforce lodging laws without adequate housing opportunities. The request for proposal should eventually give the city an opportunity to show the court it has a sustainable plan to provide for our homeless population.

Just as we have an obligation to give our taxpayers peaceful and safe neighborhoods, we have a duty to provide for people in our communities who are less fortunate than others.

*Kevin Faulconer is a San Diego councilmember, representing District 2.*